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ABSTRACT

After reviewing several of the problems facing educators in our changing society, the author focuses on the specific problem of providing adequate vocational education for rural youth. The ideas of community involvement in vocational education via business and industry advisory councils, plus more money for rural schools, are seen as possible solutions. A list of the activities and services which may be provided by industrial and educational councils is included. (DB)

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USING ADVISORY COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES TO IMPROVE VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR RURAL STUDENTS

January 28, 1970

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The Eric Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools published a series of research monographs in the area of rural education. Last May Rogers said in one of these monographs, "Educators throughout the nation are caught up with the notion of change. It is not a small or superficial interest that they feel, but a complete commitment. They are saturated, preoccupied, and consumed with change. It is their first real love affair since Progressive Education." 1/

Rogers then went on to say: "While many of the other schools in the nation court Change, the small and rural schools of our country shy away, looking only from a distance at the innovations that accompany Change as it sweeps through our educational systems.

"The small and rural schools, isolated from the mainstream of its path, rarely vent[illegible] forward, perhaps because they feel Change might be too costly, perhaps because they feel uncertain when faced with the new teaching techniques it often brings, perhaps because they feel its innovations to be inappropriate for their way of life, perhaps because they really do not know much about Change and therefore distrust it,

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1/ Rogers and Svenning, May 1969

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perhaps because they have seen what it offers and are just not interested. The dilemma of the small and rural schools is how to win the hand of Change, how to bring Change to their communities, so that rural schools can also benefit from innovation and change in education.

"The times in which we live force us to recognize and deal with change. Our total environment is composed of many and varied social systems, integrated in a weblike configuration. The acceptance of change and innovation by any one of these social systems means the other sccial institutions must respond. Any society is a sum of its many parts. If a society is one in which change is taking place at an accelerated rate, then it of necessity follows that its component parts must also be changing at a rapid pace. 2/ Our educational systems of necessity are enamored with change. The change occurring in the other sectors of our larger environment requires an educational system that can accommodate to these changes, as well as prepare individuals to live in a society that is changing and will continue to change at an ever-increasing rate."

Change for change sake is not a professional approach but when we face the contrasts and contradictions now present in our society which exceed any we have known, change becomes a requirement --perhaps especially -- for rural education:

- In a society that is or shortly will be reaching an annual productivity of one trillion dollars, over one-third of its people live in or on the margin of poverty.

2/Jean A. Keeley, "Criteria for Innovations," Educational Leadership, 25:304, January, 1968

- In a society where there are persistent unfilled demands for highly skilled employees, about four million unemployed individuals are unable to match their work skills to meaningful employment.
- In a society where the scientific establishment has actually reached the moon and in probing outer space, less than one-half of the adults over 25 years of age have completed a high school education.
- In a society where education is increasingly the basic link between youth and the world of work, some 20 percent of its young people become high school dropouts,
- In a society where over one-half of the student population does not enroll in post high school education, less than 18 percent of its students are currently being enrolled in secondary programs of vocational education of a gainful employment type.
- In a society where preparation for work is required for virtually all people in all jobs, the prevailing educational structure is primarily designed to serve the 20 percent, or less, who will eventually complete a 4-year college degree.
- In a society where education is expected -- among other expectations -- to help young people to make a living, there is an illogical and perplexing division between academic and vocational education.
- In a society which emphasizes careers and success above all other attainments, education directed to occupational preparation

> is considered inferior to education directed to other ends and is artificially set apart from them. 3/

As communities change, the role of schools --and particularly vocational education-- must also change. Many vocational education programs have trained for poverty-level, deadend jobs. This tendency must be made a thing of the past. Vocational education, perhaps more than any other type of educational program, requires close cooperation with the community. It prepares the young and adults to enter the labor force and supplies the means for up-grading their skills. Therefore, it must be evaluated and re-evaluated by persons engaged in the various occupational fields in order to be certain that instruction is relevant. Particularly in rural areas, where many young people are tempted to flee to the cities, vocational education must become synonymous with preparation for a career. Advisory Councils are not new to vocational educators; we have used them for many years -- I might more appropriately say that most of us have abused them for many years. For the first time the Congress recognized through the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968, the need, the desirability --no the necessity--for a marriage rather than a courtship between the education community and business and industry communities.

At the Federal level the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education was established. This Council brought together lay people and experts with particular interests in the various facets of

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3/ William G. Loomis, "Professional Development for Vocational Education--Its Limitless Potential" (paper presented to the Third National Vocational Technical Teacher Education Seminar, Deauville Hotel, Miami Beach, October 23, 1969).

vocational education to advise the Commissioner of Education, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, and to make recommendations for legislation to the Congress. At the state level, similar councils were required to independently evaluate each State's vocational program and make recommendations to the State Board, the Commissioner of Education, and the National Council.

In order for this chain to be strengthened and made more directly effecive, each community should consider establishing a Vocational Advisory Council with members representing the various interested groups; from business, labor, government, areas of special need, ethnic groups, and the community at large. An Advisory Council of five to ten could also be established for each individual occupation in which training is offered.

Thus, a school offering five vocational courses would have at least 25 to 50 interested community people participating in many ways in the conduct of these programs. They could be effective in student recruitment, selection and placement, the instructional program, in teacher assistance, student recognition and public relations. I have included in the written material provided for you a more comprehensive list from Sam Burt's Industry and Vocational-Technical Education.[4/]

Rural vocational educators have told me that vocational education in their communities should be a part of the total education system; that

4/ New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967, Chapter 3.

in vocational education classes are usually smaller, take up more space, require expensive supplies and equipment and, therefore, the cost per student is generally higher than for general education. They tell me that guidance is more difficult and more essential in rural areas because rural youngsters, and in some cases adults, have not had the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of vocational areas These educators have said that more funds must be made available for rural vocational education.

The National Council is currently exploring the idea suggested by Dr. John Letson, Superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools, whereby each school district would provide its average student expenditure for each student participating in a vocational program and the Federal Government would provide the additional costs are required for excellence in vocational education.

If we as vocational educators wish to continue to change in order to keep up with our changing environment, we are going to need the backing, support, and guidance of our communities. To secure this, we must maintain continuous dialogue with our communities. The most effective way of maintaining this continuous interchange of thoughts and ideas is by involving interested, active citizens in regular school advisory councils.

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APPENDIX A

Checklist of Activities and Services Provided by Local Industry-Education Advisory Committees*

Student Recruitment, Selection, and Placement

1. Encouraging young people (and parents) to consider vocational and technical education and training through visits to "feeder schools," speeches to civic clubs, career day meetings, etc.

2. Assisting in the screening of students applying for admission to the courses.

3. Participating in the development of aptitude tests for selection of students.

4. Providing information concerning desirable aptitudes, education, and experience background which applicants for entry level jobs should have so that educators may properly plan their student recruitment, as well as educational and training programs.

5. Arranging plant or field trip visits for students and counselors.

6. Providing vocational guidance literature to teachers, counselors, and students.

7. Assisting and participating in surveys of local industry manpower needs.

8. Assisting in the development of aptitude tests, achievement tests, and certification and licensing tests concerned with initial employment of school graduates.

9. Placing students in part-time work during school year or summer vacations.

10. Placing school graduates in jobs.

Instructional Program

1. Assisting in the preparation and review of budget requests for laboratory and shop equipment and supplies.

2. Evaluating physical conditions, adequacy of equipment, and layout of laboratory or shop.

3. Assisting in the development and review of course content to assure its currency in meeting the changing skill and knowledge needs of the industry.

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*Samuel M. Burt, Industry and Vocational-Technical Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), Chapter 3.

4. Obtaining needed school equipment and supplies on loan, as gifts, or at special prices.

5. Assisting in the establishment of standards of proficiency to be met by students.

6. Assisting in the development of school policy concerning the kinds and volume of production work or "live jobs" to be produced by students so that this work will be of instructional value in the educational program.

7. Establishing and maintaining a library of visual aids, magazines, and books concerning industry.

8. Assisting in the development of special educational and training programs conducted with funds made available by the Manpower Development and Training Act, the Economic Opportunity Act, etc.

9. Assisting in the development of evening school skill improvement and technical courses for employed plant personnel.

10. Assisting in the development of apprenticeship and on-the-job training related courses.

11. Arranging plant or field trip visits for teachers.

12. Providing sample kits of raw materials, finished products, charts, posters, etc., for exhibit and instructional purposes in classrooms and shops.

13. Assisting in the establishment of student fees and charges for courses and programs.

Teacher Assistance

1. Providing funds to assist local teachers to attend regional and national meetings of industry and teacher organizations.

2. Arranging meetings of teachers to establish cooperative relationships between the schools and industry.

3. Arranging summer employment for teachers.

4. Assisting in the establishment of teacher qualification requirements.

5. Conducting clinics and in-service and out-service training programs for teachers.

6. Arranging for substitute or resource instructors from industry to assist regular teachers.

7. Subsidizing teacher salaries in such unusual cases as may be necessary to obtain qualified instructors.

8. Paying industry organization membership dues for teachers.

9. Providing awards and prizes to outstanding teachers.

Student Recognition

1. Providing scholarships and other financial assistance for outstanding graduates who wish to continue their education and training.

2. Providing prizes to outstanding students.

Public Relations

1. Providing speakers to address trade and civic groups concerning the industry's education and training program in the school.

2. Providing news stories concerning school programs to magazines published for specific industry groups.

3. Providing news stories concerning school programs to local news media.

4. Attending meetings in support of vocational and technical education which may be called by local and state school officials, boards, and legislative groups.

5. Participating in radio and television programs designed to "sell" vocational and technical education to the public.

6. Contributing funds to advertise specific school occupational education and training programs.

7. Advising employees and their families concerning school programs by posting the information on bulletin boards, news stories in company publications, and enclosures in pay envelopes.